



UNITED STATES COMMISSION
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S HERITAGE ABROAD

WARREN L. MILLER
CHAIRMAN

November 27, 2002

The Honorable Brian Carlson
Ambassador of
the United States of America
Riga, Latvia

Dear Brian:

I regret that I cannot be present at the dedication of the memorial to the victims of the massacres in the Rumbula Forest. However, I did visit the site when I was in Latvia last month to sign the agreement between the United States and the Latvian government for the preservation of cultural properties. The memorial is very moving and appropriate. I am proud that the United States commission that I chair is a sponsor of it.

The cruel and systematic murder of more than 25,000 human beings in two days, 1000 people an hour, is numbing to the mind and the human spirit. How could this happen? How could man do this to his fellow man?

The victims were mainly women, children, and old men. How were they a threat to the Nazis and their collaborators? I do not have an answer for you -- perhaps because the enormity of the crime defies explanation. We must reflect upon what happened, and commit ourselves to educating the people of Latvia and the world about this tragic and shameful event that occurred on Latvian soil. The story of Rumbula must be told and retold to the children of Latvia, and to their children's children. It must be told truthfully and factually. It will be painful and embarrassing because some Latvians -- perhaps 1,000 -- participated in the massacres. If proof can be acquired, those perpetrators who are still alive should be prosecuted. To date, none have been. Many Latvian citizens do not know or do not want to believe what happened. But it is imperative in a free and democratic nation that history is dealt with accurately and truthfully.

Those killed at Rumbula were not killed for anything they had done. They were killed simply because of the religion into which they had been born. They deserve the recognition and dignity that this memorial creates. But, the Jewish survivors of the Latvian Holocaust need to know that these crimes will not be forgotten. They, and Jews worldwide, need to know that the rest of humanity cares and mourns with them.

November 27, 2002

Please convey my best wishes to all present for a meaningful, memorable, and fitting tribute on this sad but important occasion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. L. Miller', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Warren L. Miller

Chairman

United States Commission for

the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad